

Gary McIntosh and Alan McMahan are my friends and coworkers in the work of the Lord. I greatly admire the work that they have done on this book. Churches in a multi-ethnic community must be multi-ethnic in their ministry. However, not all churches are multi-ethnic, especially those churches that are in a community that represent one socioeconomic class or ethnic group. Therefore, no church should ever be intentionally segregated and remain a New Testament church. This book will help you understand and plan how to fulfill the Great Commission in your community.

—**Elmer L. Towns**, cofounder, Liberty University, Lynchburg, Virginia

McIntosh and McMahan do an outstanding job of highlighting the challenges and opportunities of being the church in today's changing cultural mix. Their insights based on solid research and personal experiences provide a marvelous foundation on which to build effective ministry. If you are looking for a work that will provide a common-sense approach to ministry in our multi-ethnic world, this book needs to be part of your resource tool kit.

—**Phil Stevenson**, director of Church Multiplication & Leadership Development, Pacific-Southwest District, The Wesleyan Church

This volume should be required reading for every pastor in the United States! The authors have done a massive amount of research into the demographic changes that have taken place in this nation in the last ten years, changes that affect every church. Their evaluation of how various churches are dealing or not dealing with the situation is worth the price of the book itself. The comparisons to the New Testament church and their insights from that study reveal a solid biblical basis for all their recommendations. In our ever-changing society, I am proud to highly recommend this very helpful volume.

—**L. David Beckman**, president emeritus, Colorado Christian University

Being the Church in a Multi-Ethnic Community is an excellent primer for the serious church leader seeking to be well-informed on the important issues related to multi-ethnic ministry. I especially appreciate the balanced discussion McIntosh and McMahan present on the Homogeneous Unit Principle. Those who have struggled with the imposed guilt of leading a mono-ethnic church will find their words liberating. The value of this book will rise with time as rising trends in immigration and the migration to cities creates new opportunities for the church to share its transformative message.

—**Jeff Mansell**, district superintendent, Greater Ohio District, The Wesleyan Church

Gary and Alan's latest book is insightful for understanding the diversity of the North American population and the complexity of the church's ministry in our multi-ethnic world. This resource helps judicatory leaders and pastors understand the basics of multi-ethnic ministry and possible strategies that can be used to reach as many people for Christ as possible. This is a must read for leaders who are interested in God's kingdom expanding.

—**Doug Talley**, executive state pastor, Indiana Ministries, Church of God

In the late sixties, missions was “over there.” That is no longer true. God has brought missions to America! If you are truly interested in ministering to the multi-ethnic, multicultural reality of twenty-first-century America, then this book is a must read. Study it. Understand it. Practice the principles outlined in the text. You and those to whom you minister will be forever grateful!

—**Gordon E. Penfold**, multi-ethnic pastor and director of
Fresh Start Ministries, Holyoke, Colorado

I'm an immigrant to the US since 1973. I'm wondering, “Where was this book then?” *Being the Church in a Multi-Ethnic Community* is timely, because trans-ethnic fusion continues to grow with a never-ending tide. While businesses and corporations have led the way in mutual understanding and respect, the church is waking up to an old-new reality best stated by Gary McIntosh and Alan McMahan in the first chapter, aptly titled “Pay Attention! The Immigrants Are Here!” This book is a must read.

—**Samuel R. Chand**, author of *Cracking Your Church's Culture Code*

In a burst of enthusiasm, I jotted two references in the margins within the first five pages: Revelation 7:9 and Ephesians 2:14–18. Both passages reflected for me the great ideal—one new humanity by grace through the cross. McIntosh and McMahan reshaped my too-easy idealism and moved me to a more robust grasp of the challenge the great ideal poses in real life. Happily, this book gives readers a language for understanding the complexity of the challenges; it also provides a framework within which to embrace the opportunities posed by the diverse ethnic richness that increasingly surrounds us.

—**Carl C. Green**, pastor, educator, organizational development consultant

Being the Church in a Multi-Ethnic Community provides a solid strategy for concrete actions designed to reach people with the gospel. I am especially impressed with the step-by-step instructions for a transitional church. The authors provide a compelling argument for reaching urban centers where ethnic groups are most likely located. They provide a realistic strategy of transitioning existing churches as one tool among many to be used to reach the new ethnic presence in many urban communities.

—**Franklin R. Dumond**, coauthor of *Legacy Churches*; director of congregational ministries, General Association of General Baptists

Written by two seasoned intercultural specialists, this work provides creative and practical multi-ethnic models for reaching our world. Along with insights on current demographic research, the book's questions at the end of each chapter will stimulate church leaders to navigate the complexities of multi-ethnic ministries, creating a unique map for your specific church in fulfilling God's mission of calling all people to himself.

—**Miles (Skip) Lewis**, director of MA in ministry programs,
Lancaster Bible College Graduate School

BEING THE CHURCH IN A MULTI-ETHNIC COMMUNITY

Why It Matters and How It Works

Gary L. McIntosh

Alan McMahan



Indianapolis, Indiana

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To Terri, Billy, and Jonathan who, each in their own way, have been supportive through many hours of labor and provided much inspiration for the journey.

—Alan McMahan

To the hundreds of students who have attended my classes at Talbot School of Theology over the last quarter century. Thanks for teaching me so much about multi-ethnic ministry.

—Gary L. McIntosh



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many different churches, we have been able to assemble some of the insights gathered into these pages.

Thanks to our acquisitions editor, Kevin Scott, and his team at Wesleyan Publishing House, for their excellent work on this book. They were more than patient with us as we worked through the editorial process. This finished book is a result of numerous persons working behind the scenes to provide the best possible book for our readers.

PAY ATTENTION! THE IMMIGRANTS ARE HERE!

If Walmart is diverse, then your church can be diverse.
—Rev. David Anderson

Have you taken the Walmart test? If not, it might be time to do so. One day this week, drive to the Walmarts within a twenty-mile radius of your church and see who is shopping there. What you find may surprise you. The United States is dramatically more diverse than it was ten years ago, a fact often unnoticed by church leaders and worshipers.

While most of us have carried on with work, family, and various other activities during the last decade, the US has changed. Reports from the recent census show that the United States is “more diverse from the bottom up.”¹ Growth in ethnic populations is observable in nearly every state from Minnesota to California, from Idaho to Texas, and from Florida to Montana. For example, ten years ago 12 percent of Minnesota’s population was made up of minorities; it has risen to 17 percent today. According to Minnesota State demographer Tom Gillaspay, “80 percent of the state’s population growth since 2000 is attributable to minorities.”² The black population grew 59 percent, Hispanics are up 75 percent, and Asians increased 51 percent during the last decade in Minnesota. In New Mexico, for the first time ever, the number of Hispanics surpassed whites. Non-Hispanic whites represent

40.5 percent of New Mexico's population today, with 46.3 percent being Hispanic, according to recent census data.³ Those are but two examples; similar findings are shocking researchers and observers throughout the US as more statistics from the census are reported.

Changes in the patterns of ethnicity are part of a larger growth trend that sees the western United States surpassing the Midwest in population. "Will it play in Peoria?" was a common refrain in the 1960s that referenced that area of the country as the mainstream US population. For marketers and politicians, if something was accepted by the midwesterners, they knew it would also be accepted by the mainstream population elsewhere. The Midwest has been the cultural heartland of the United States since the 1850s (before then it was in West Virginia). Over the last decade, the center of US population has shifted from around Peoria, Illinois, to somewhere in Texas County, Missouri. Peoria, Arizona (a suburb of Phoenix) is now larger than Peoria, Illinois. "Will it play in Peoria?" now makes more sense with reference to Arizona than Illinois.

Where is the fastest growth occurring in the United States? It is in the mountain states of Arizona, Colorado, Montana, Idaho, Wyoming, Utah, Nevada, and New Mexico. Such population growth is primarily driven by the arrival of Latino immigrants who desire what every ethnic population has ever desired—jobs, affordable housing, safety, and opportunity.

AN OLD TREND

The imminent wave of new immigrants coming to America was heralded by *TIME* magazine the week of July 8, 1985, in its cover story, "Immigrants: The Changing Face of America." At the time, the special issue was the largest in *TIME*'s history with over eighty editorial pages. Information was gathered from *TIME*'s ten bureaus, dozens of editors, and scores of writers and correspondents throughout the United States. It was only the fourth time in the history of the magazine that an issue was devoted to one subject. The subject matter covered everything: "education, culture, food, business, religion, indeed every aspect of our lives."⁴

Stories of people from India, Romania, Kampuchea, Afghanistan, Philippines, Ethiopia, Laos, Soviet Union, Ghana, Ireland, Cuba, and South Korea were chronicled.

As the 1985 issue of *TIME* focused on the delights and opportunities created by new immigrants, the challenge of ethnic and cultural change led *TIME* to publish another special issue just eight years later in the fall of 1993. The magazine bore the lead title “The New Face of America: How Immigrants Are Shaping the World’s First Multicultural Society.” To illustrate the new face of America, particularly the impact of intermarriage, *TIME*’s managing editor commissioned the composition of a computer image by morphing together the photographs of seven men and seven women of different ethnic backgrounds. After sixty-five hours of computer work using a complicated formula, the picture of a woman was created that was reportedly 15 percent Anglo-Saxon, 17.5 percent Middle Eastern, 17.5 percent African, 7.5 percent Asian, 35 percent Southern European, and 7.5 percent Hispanic. The picture was used on the magazine’s cover.⁵

However, uniting ethnic peoples into a unified whole proved to be easier on a computer than in real life. In the 1993 issue, *TIME*’s published articles focused on the public’s growing resistance to immigration (“Not Quite So Welcome Anymore”), the rise of illegal aliens (“The Shadow of the Law”), the impact of immigrants on the arts (“The Art of Diversity”), the challenge of legal justice in a multi-ethnic society (“Whose Peers?”), and the growing conflict of different religions (“One Nation Under Gods”).

Without doubt, the face of the United States has changed and is continuing to change. The new ethnic marketplace is forcing government, business, and churches to rethink how to speak the language and adopt the culture of the new multi-ethnic and multicultural reality.

CHURCHES BEGIN TO RESPOND

While *TIME* was busy documenting the joys and juggernauts of the new ethnic reality in the larger US culture, observers of the church world also alerted church leaders to the new challenges that were coming.

Christianity Today's lead article for July 19, 1985, read "The Overseas Challenge Comes Home: Where are the missionaries to meet the arriving millions?" The article noted that, while there had been different waves of immigration into the United States since the 1800s, the floodgates of new immigrants were opened wide in the 1980s. Mission was coming home to America, but church leaders and people were not ready to receive them or reach them with the gospel. Some leaders, like the late Ralph Winter, saw the future opportunity for mission. He commented, "In the next five years, we are going to witness this century's greatest single mutation in the structure of missions. As a result, missions will no longer be viewed as something we simply do overseas, but something we do within groups of unreached peoples, whether those groups are located in Singapore or Los Angeles."⁶ Unfortunately, even though mission leaders like Winter called for churches in the United States to respond, most refused to see the opportunities for mission that the new immigrants brought with them.

Some churches, however, did take notice and began to shift ministry budgets, personnel, and priorities to reach the new ethnic peoples. Just one year following the article in *Christianity Today*, *MissionsUSA*, a publication of the Home Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, published "The American Mosaic: Our Nation of Immigrants." The article reported that each Sunday, Southern Baptists worshiped in eighty-seven languages and dialects. At the time, Southern Baptists reportedly were the most integrated denomination in America with some forty-six hundred congregations representing eighty-four of the nation's five hundred ethnic groups and ninety-seven of the 495 Native American tribes. Since 1974 an average of three new ethnic groups had become part of the Southern Baptist Convention.⁷

A GROWING INTEREST

If only a few churches and denominations grasped the enormous realities and consequences of the new immigrants coming to the United States in the 1980s, today it appears many have a growing concern. Interest in starting new churches to reach different ethnic groups is seen from all corners,

including The Wesleyan Church, Church of God Anderson, Baptist General Conference, the Evangelical Free Church, the Foursquare Church, the Assemblies of God, and Southern Baptists. Church planting is viewed as the main and best way to win new peoples to Christ. But another major emphasis is gaining interest: planting multi-ethnic churches.

Since the 1960s, when people pointed out that Sunday morning was the most segregated hour in the United States, church leaders have longed for the day when those of different ethnic backgrounds would worship together in local congregations. That dream is finally being realized from coast to coast. Today, multi-ethnic churches are readily found in New York City, Chicago, and Los Angeles, as well as in Little Rock, Portland, and Phoenix.

A decade ago, Grace Chapel in Lexington, Massachusetts (a suburb of Boston) was nearly 100 percent white. Today, it is estimated that 25 percent of worshipers are minorities, with three groups—Koreans, Haitians, and Chinese—being the main ones. The church has even called a pastor of multicultural ministries to help steer the church's outreach toward ethnic peoples in the larger community. Grace Chapel is just one example among numerous large churches that are seeking to become more ethnically diverse.

Smaller churches are also interested in becoming a church representative of all nations. Open Table Community Church in Chamblee, Georgia, is one example. Five years ago, the church's worship attendees were 99 percent white. After the pastor caught a new vision for a multi-ethnic church, the church relocated three times to get closer to immigrant and refugee communities in order to reach them for Christ, as well as to learn from them. Today the church's main board is 50 percent nonwhite, and 30 percent of the congregation is made up of diverse ethnic peoples. Similar churches are springing up all over the United States, from Compton, California, to Dayton, Ohio, and from Grand Rapids, Michigan, to Seattle, Washington.

But while the dream of multi-ethnic churches is slowly becoming a reality in the US, there are a growing array of models and little understanding of the characteristics, patterns, and problems of such churches among

church leaders. Anyone who has tried to start a multi-ethnic church or turn an older church into a multi-ethnic community of faith realizes there are enormous challenges, misunderstandings, and difficulties to overcome in the process to become increasingly diverse.

WHY THIS BOOK?

While North American church leaders know a great deal about planting and growing mono-ethnic churches, most struggle with reaching new ethnic groups and establishing multi-ethnic churches. Thus, we have written *Being the Church in a Multi-Ethnic Community: Why It Matters and How It Works* to serve as an introductory guide, a basic primer to provide an overview of the issues, challenges, and essential principles to develop multi-ethnic churches in the United States.

A small sampling of the questions you will find answered in this book include . . .

- What is a multi-ethnic church?
- Can a multi-ethnic church truly be multicultural?
- Why are multi-ethnic churches important in the United States?
- What is fueling the interest in multi-ethnic churches today?
- How is the Homogeneous Unit Principle to be understood in a multi-ethnic context?
- What are the major multi-ethnic models being used in the United States?
- What are the common denominators, patterns, or practices being used among multi-ethnic churches?
- What are the major barriers or challenges in designing multi-ethnic churches?
- Must all churches be multi-ethnic?
- What are the best options and approaches to use in starting multi-ethnic churches in the United States?

Most books available today address the multi-ethnic church from narrow perspectives. Some tell the story of only one church, others focus on specific ethnic groups, and still others stress one model or viewpoint of multi-ethnic ministry. While such books provide important information, *Being the Church in a Multi-Ethnic Community* seeks to cover the basic missiological issues involved. We define *missiology* simply as “the study of how peoples come to God in history.”⁸ By peoples we mean the various individuals, families, clans, tribes, and ethnic groups in the world, or what the Bible calls “the nations” (*ta ethne* of Matt. 28:19–20). By “come to God in history”, we mean an analysis and synthesis of the theological, sociological, anthropological, historical, and practical processes that God uses to bring all peoples to himself. Hence, this book is not just an analysis of individual parts of multi-ethnic ministry but an exploration of the dynamic synthesis of all the parts. Ministry always takes place in context, and this book attempts to alert the reader to many of the ingredients that form the North American context for multi-ethnic ministry. Each chapter analyzes a specific aspect of missiology, while synthesis comes together gradually throughout the book.

Missiology in North America is dynamic, not static. It responds to new challenges, fresh contexts, and emerging models. No living person can adequately engage the complex, interacting pulses that make up missiology in North America, let alone the world. However, we hope to introduce you, the reader, to the interplay of missiological theory, field research, and biblical mission. Part of the challenge is separating the eternal from the changing, while allowing for both to exist in dynamic tension. We serve an eternal God and communicate an eternal gospel. But we serve and communicate such to real people in time and culture. It is our desire that *Being the Church in a Multi-Ethnic Community* will aid you to be faithful in winning all peoples to personal faith in Jesus Christ, and to bring them into Christ’s church where they can serve him as their Lord and Savior. “That is [the] goal, that the Great Commission of Jesus to His Church may continue in our day and generation, and the Gospel may be heard, the lives of people transformed, and they may be incorporated into His Church, and have fellowship with Him and with each other.”⁹

An important aspect of this book is that both of us are missiologists, having experience both in the United States and in other countries. Together we bring over sixty years of ministry experience—cross-cultural and mono-cultural—to the discussion of this important aspect of ministry.

Alan has served as a vice president for the Alliance Theological Seminary in Nyack, New York, and as the academic dean at The King's College in midtown Manhattan. He currently is associate professor of intercultural studies at Biola University. A former missionary in Indonesia, Alan has worked with churches in North America and on the Pacific Rim and has taught in the areas of missiology, church growth, leadership, organizational development, and evangelism. He is active in training undergraduate and graduate students including mid-career professionals, schoolteachers, pastors, and denominational leaders throughout the United States, Canada, and much of Southeast Asia in the effective means to develop leaders and grow churches. He holds a PhD from Fuller Theological Seminary and a ThM from Asbury Theological Seminary in missiology, as well as an MDiv in missions from Alliance Theological Seminary. He is listed in *Who's Who Among America's Teachers* and has received the Leadership Award and the Donald McGavran Church Growth Award from Fuller Theological Seminary. He is general editor of the *Great Commission Research Journal*.

Gary is a nationally and internationally known author, speaker, consultant, and professor of Christian ministry and leadership at Talbot School of Theology, also of Biola University. He has written extensively in the field of pastoral ministry, leadership, generational studies, and church growth. He received his BA from Colorado Christian University in biblical studies, an MDiv from Western Seminary in pastoral studies, a DMin from Fuller Theological Seminary in church growth studies, and a PhD in intercultural studies also from Fuller Theological Seminary. Gary has served over twelve hundred churches in more than eighty denominations throughout the United States and Canada, and he edits the popular *Growth Points* newsletter.

GETTING STARTED

If this is the first time you have considered the multi-ethnic church challenge, it is best to start with chapter 2 and read through all chapters as written. Attacking the issue with this approach provides a step-by-step, logical progression to the issues. On the other hand, if you have read other books or are familiar with the challenges of designing a multi-ethnic church, read over the table of contents and start with the chapter that attracts your attention and interest. While each chapter builds on the one before, each is generally written so that it can stand alone. You will find that some information is repeated throughout this book. We intentionally did this so that those readers who do not read the chapters in order will still have important information.

You will notice right away that we seek to stay in the middle of the road. We are not unabashed multi-ethnic church proponents, but we do believe churches must move toward greater inclusiveness and cultural sensitivity in our day. But we also believe that mono-ethnic churches are biblical and needed too. From our perspective, it will take all kinds of churches—mono-ethnic and multi-ethnic—to reach all the nations for Christ.

Demographers predict the population of the United States will top four hundred million by the middle of the twenty-first century.¹⁰ Most of these people will live in urban centers of the United States, which will place at least 90 percent or more of Americans in close proximity with people of other ethnicities and cultures. In fact, this is already happening. For example, in a suburb of Seattle, Washington, a study of the people occupying ten randomly selected homes found the following different families: one family each from India, Singapore, Mexico, Samoa, Ethiopia, Russia, and—from the United States—two Caucasians, one Native American, and one African-American. All of these families lived on the same block! In such situations, which are going to be more prominent in the future, multi-ethnic churches are likely to be present. Now is the time to prepare for future realities. *Being the Church in a Multi-Ethnic Community* will help you get ready.

PUTTING INSIGHTS TO WORK

1. Do you see ethnic changes in your community? If so, describe what you see. Are new businesses being established? Are new languages being used? Describe as specifically as possible what you observe.
2. In what ways is ethnic change impacting your church and its ministry? Describe the impact on outreach, welcoming of newcomers, growth and decline in attendance, experience in worship, and other areas.
3. How is your church responding to the ethnic changes in your area? In what ways is your ministry adapting or changing? What must change in the future?



NOTES

Chapter 1

1. Judy Keen, “More Diverse from the Bottom Up,” *USA Today*, March 17, 2011.
2. Ibid.
3. Melanie Eversley, “In a First, Hispanics Outnumber Whites,” *USA Today*, March 17, 2011.
4. John A. Meyer, “A Letter from the Publisher,” *TIME*, July 8, 1985, 3.
5. James R. Gaines, “From the Managing Editor,” *TIME*, Fall 1993, 2.
6. Ralph Winter, “Reaching the ‘Moving Target,’” *Christianity Today*, July 12, 1985, 18.
7. “Growth of a Nation,” *MissionsUSA*, January/February 1986, 61.
8. This definition of missiology is adapted from Alan Tippett, *Introduction to Missiology* (Pasadena, Calif.: William Carey Library, 1987), xiii.
9. Ibid., xix.
10. Joel Kotin, “Ready Set Grow,” *Smithsonian*, July/August 2010, 61.